

Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
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In support of raised Senate Bill 1108 *An Act Concerning Access to Reproductive Health*
Care by College Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education
March 2, 2023

Senator Slap, Representative Haddad, and honorable members of the Higher Education and Employment Committee, my name is Gretchen Raffa, Vice President Public Policy, Advocacy and Organizing at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of raised Senate Bill 1108 *An Act Concerning Access to Reproductive Health Care by College Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education*. As the state's largest provider of sexual and reproductive health care, including abortion, to over 50,000 patients at 14 health centers across the state, Planned Parenthood believes all people should have access to quality, affordable health care as a basic human right — regardless of who you are, where you live, your income or if you have health insurance.

As reproductive rights continue to be under attack across the nation, we thank the legislature and the Lamont administration for your ongoing commitment and action to protect and expand access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including abortion care. Thankfully, abortion is still legal in Connecticut. Yet we know legality has never guaranteed access for all people. Even in our own state, hurdles like distance, money, time off work, and other restrictions have stood in the way of people's health despite having the legal right. No one should face barriers to time-sensitive essential health care.

Here's the fact: many students at residential colleges and universities can't get the sexual and reproductive health care they need and deserve. Whether it's lack of access to birth control and emergency contraception, inadequate services or referrals, the need for transportation, or rising costs keeping care out of reach — too many college students in Connecticut don't have the support or resources to make decisions about their health, their bodies, and their lives.

Access to care has never been more vital. One in three women of reproductive age in the U.S. — and more trans and nonbinary people — no longer have access to abortion in their state because 18 states have banned, or severely restricted abortion (including 13 near-total bans) and more state bans are likely this year since abortion rights affirmed by *Roe v. Wade* 50 years ago were stolen from us last June by the United States Supreme Court. The communities most harmed by abortion bans and restrictions — including Black, Latino, Indigenous people, immigrants, those who live in rural areas, and LGBTQ+ people — already faced barriers to health care and financial opportunity because of the country's legacy of systemic racism and discrimination.

S.B. 1108 is a crucial step to help reduce barriers and improve access to reproductive health services on college campuses across Connecticut or by connecting students with outside resources. This bill will ensure students receive timely and effective care that supports their well-being, reproductive autonomy, and post-secondary success. We would ask the committee to amend bill language Section 2 (b) (2) to ensure that the provision of referrals for and transportation services to access reproductive health care services at any off-campus location reference referral to a licensed medical provider. This will help ensure students are receiving medically accurate, nonjudgmental, comprehensive health care options from a licensed health care provider.

Planned Parenthood will continue to fight for policies that protect the rights of all people to ensure our patients and communities have what they need to live healthy and self-determined lives. We urge the committee to vote in support of S.B. 1108, with amended language, to increase access to reproductive health care for students enrolled in Connecticut residential colleges and universities. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important legislation.